Transformation of diplomatic elites in post-communist societies

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Abstract: *»Die Transformation der diplomatischen Elite in postkommunistischen Gesellschaften«*. This article addresses the transformation of the diplomatic elite in the post-communist period, based on the results of the comprehensive survey. The analysis demonstrated that in the majority of the countries surveyed diplomats were drawn disproportionately from a very exclusive segment of society: the urban intelligentsia. Furthermore, the picture of a diplomat from a post communist country is similar to that of a diplomat from any western country. In other words, the diplomats in post communist countries are recruited from the same strata from which the diplomats in countries experiencing political stability would normally be recruited. In those few countries where a break up with the regime prevented the majority of the urban elite from being considered reliable by new regime, preference was given to persons with rural background, overwhelmingly men.

Keywords: diplomatic elite, elite continuity, post-communist transformation, gender.

Introduction

In this article I address the transformation of the diplomatic elite in the post-communist period. Elites are often seen as the initiators of political order changes in all types of society and in various circumstances (Higley and Pakulski 2000). The opposite is also argued to be true: changes in political orders are often expected to be reflected in the changes in elites, particularly in the political elite.

Classical theories distinguish between "routine" elite circulation and "crisis" circulation. The first processes, also referred to as the "social reproduction" process, is a process through which the elite assures its stability by allowing a controlled small influx of people of lower social status to take up a place in the upper level of society. The second process refers to a fundamental change in the elite composition due to deep fundamental disturbances in society. Higley and Pakulski (Higley and Pakulski 2000) contribute to this division another two dimensions: the scope and mode of circulation. This scope can be narrow or wide as it can be shallow or deep. It is narrow if only the people in top positions are replaced, and it is wide if it affects all elite position holders. It is shal-

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low if the top elites are replaced by those from the second-level of elites, and it is deep if top elites are replaced by new people, be it from the ranks of counter-elites or from outside the elite establishment altogether. Similarly, the mode of circulation is gradual and negotiated when elites are replaced through voluntary resignations, retirements, and transfers; the mode is sudden and coerced if elites are overthrown or replaced violently. Based on these dimensions, Higley and Pakulski distinguish four types of circulation: classic, replacement, quasi-replacement and reproduction.

With this in mind, I have examined a specific and particular sector of the political elite, namely the diplomatic service. Very little has been learned particularly about the diplomatic elites, despite a great accumulation of theoretical and empirical knowledge on political elites in general. Furthermore, no study of the fundamental characteristics of these new diplomats has been reported, although several studies have been carried out at intervals in the past (Bailey 1979; Harr 1965). The aim of this study is to take a first step in the process of exploring modern diplomatic elites in the post-communist states of Europe and Asia. Analysing the profiles of the people and the ways used to secure a position in the diplomatic elite allowed to answer the question of which groups of people were favoured at the entry level into the diplomatic elite and institutions of post-communist countries. A conclusion will thus be attempted as to whether among emerging diplomatic elites the process of circulation of elites prevailed over that of reproduction, or vice versa.

Two criteria distinguish this study. First, there are space and time limitations. Geographically, the study is limited to post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The period of time examined is limited to the first decade and a half after the break-up of the old political regime, roughly after 1989. Second, the focus is upon entry-level diplomats to a greater degree than was the case in older works on political elite and diplomacy. This focus is not merely of academic interest. Entry-level diplomats then, are the persons who represent the Foreign Service decision-making process today and will increasingly do so in the near future.

In the next sections, the survey data is described, providing basic characteristics of those queried as well as exploring in depths the general sociological characteristics of these diplomats, including their education, family background and social origins as well as their professional experience. The findings are then integrated into a general portrait of the entry-level post-communist diplomat. Equipped with knowledge about the essential characteristics of diplomats, the hypothesis of elite circulation versus elite reproduction among diplomats in the post-communist countries will be addressed.

Survey Data

The sample for this research was drawn from data available in the 1990-2004 yearbooks of the Diplomatic Academy (DA), Vienna, on the participants in the special course, solely aimed at the young diplomats from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union participants (DA Vienna 1990-2004). This is the most suitable from known databases available for the purposes of this research. As one of the first specialized diplomatic training programmes offered to diplomats from post-socialist countries, the programme at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna has been exceptional in its continuity (more than 10 years) and coverage of countries, areas of training (political, economic, legal and security dimensions including international relations, international economics and international law as well as international security subjects) and in the number of participants. An effort has been made by the DA to ensure a fair gender distribution and to maintain an age limit. This database was used to reach out the participants. The research itself was based on a 36-question, English-language survey of this "population". 130 of the 449 questionnaires were returned, for a rate of reply of 30%. The distribution of replies by country, age group, gender and level of educations was balanced overall. Non-reply was also not found to be a source of bias. All of these factors spoke in favour of the representativeness of the sample.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Diplomats

A thorough examination of the characteristics of the respondents, with a focus on educational background, family background, and social origins, was carried out. The educational background was determined by the highest educational degree obtained and the specialization chosen. The family characteristics of respondents were investigated by analysing the family status and family size of respondents, ethnic origins and language profile, religious beliefs and their area of residence. An examination of social origins was made through an analysis of parents' education and parents' professional occupation, the size of the parents' family and parents' divorce rate. An additional point of interest, also dealt with in this section, was whether the respondents had relatives in the diplomatic service.

A comprehensive look was taken at the professional career of the respondents: how they entered the Foreign Service of their countries; what previous professional experience, if any, they had; or whether they had developed any parallel careers or had done any additional jobs.

Education

The respondents differ from the general population by being uniformly better educated. Hence, the majority of respondents (more than 50%) reported having a Master's degree; the second largest group of respondents had a University (Bachelor's) degree (>30%); the smallest group (just over 10%) reported having a PhD degree. Cumulatively, the Master's and PhD groups account for almost 70% of the sample. To put this into perspective, for none of the countries under study did the percentage of the population studying for an undergraduate university degree or higher exceed 24% of the general population in the 20-30 age group, while among diplomats 100% had at least a university (Bachelor's) degree (UN 1980-2003). One should also specify that the level of educations (at least Bachelor's degree) is one of the essential requirements of newcomers into diplomacy.

Diplomats attended a university in the capital city and study abroad. In all but one of the countries surveyed, the majority (90%) of the diplomats attended a university in the capital city. The exception is Estonia. In this case, two out of three respondents reported attending the University of Tartu. However, given the small number of answers, it cannot be assumed that this represents a difference between Estonia and the other countries, but rather reflects this particular data set.

A few respondents reported attending a university abroad, either for their undergraduate education or for a more advanced degree. Although the total number was small (28), some tendencies can be noted.

- Tendency 1: 'University in the 'former' capital city'. The survey identified a tendency to attend a metropolitan university in what formerly were federation-type states even after the change of political regime and the break-away of certain entities. Hence, respondents from the former national republics of the Soviet Union still pursued a degree from Moscow's universities, while respondents from the former constituent parts of Yugoslavia attended the university in Belgrade.
- Tendency 2: 'Neighbourhood university'. Another tendency is an intra-federal exchange of students, which refers to cases in which an exchange took place inside the borders of what was then the same country: a student from Turkmenistan attended a university in Ukraine, a student from Kyrgyzstan attended a university in Uzbekistan and a student from Bosnia and Herzegovina attended a university in Croatia.
- Tendency 3: 'Direction West'. Beginning with the period roughly corresponding to Gorbachev's ascension to power, there has been a new trend in the destination of students seeking to pursue higher education. This trend is towards the established western universities in Germany, the UK, France and the US.
- Tendency 4: 'Direction Middle East/Asia'. This tendency applies to young diplomats from the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, in which

respondents attended universities in Syria, Korea, etc. This tendency likely developed after the proclamation of independence of these countries. At that moment, they began to redefine their geo-political place and position and thus probably became more interested in establishing ties with neighbouring or close countries, with which relations had been somewhat neglected in the past.

- Tendency 5: 'Professional schools'. Within the MFA, respondents attended specialized Diplomatic Schools in France, Malta, Spain or the US. Of course, all the respondents in this study also attended a training programme at the DA, Vienna.

Future diplomats specialise in a variety of subjects. Diplomacy and international relations scored high (19.8%) among specializations pursued by respondents while earning their highest reported education degree. However, law was the most frequently reported specialization: every fourth diplomat in the sample had a law degree. Other specializations were economics (12.4%), philology (10.7%), political science (9.9%) and history (9.1%). Overall, more than 80% of respondents had a degree in one of the six disciplines: foreign affairs, law, economics, political science, history, or philology. Moreover, almost every second respondent (45.5% (55 respondents)) had specialized in an 'international' subject area, be it international relations, international law, international economics or the history of international relations. Nevertheless, only 20% of future diplomats actually had a degree in a subject directly related to foreign affairs (that is diplomacy or international relations). Arguably, it might be that not all respondents intended to become diplomats when starting their education. It could also be that, given the high status of their families (as shown later), and thus probably better access to information and an easier path to the prestigious educational disciplines but not necessarily to greater wealth (a special feature of the former communist societies), future diplomats did not have to make professional choices early in their lives. They could afford to stay longer in education, concentrate on following a prestigious specialization (such as law or economics) first and could then decide on the area of its applicability. Or, alternatively, they may have considered international relations to be a subject which could be studied later (for an advanced degree) or in practice (directly on the job or in a training course, such as those at the DA), while language skills (e.g., the relatively high percentage of philologists) or knowledge of law and economics had to be acquired beforehand. Another explanation might be that, at the time the post-communist diplomatic services were established, the need for people with foreign language skills was high (especially in the new countries) and thus many people with a degree in philology were attracted to the diplomatic service. Or it could be that an explicit policy to change the former communist political elites led to a situation in which criteria other than a specialized education in foreign affairs took priority, and this might explain the presence of so many people with specializations only tenuously

related to diplomacy. It could also be that the respondents were initially not planning to work in diplomacy because, at that moment, the possibility was seen as remote. However, with the political transformations that took place in the 1990s, many previously provincial cities became capitals of the new states needing to set up their diplomatic services. Thus a remote possibility thereafter became a viable possibility. It might also have coincided with the period when recent school graduates were deciding upon their career paths and a new option seemed attractive.

The high percentage of lawyers among all respondents is probably explained by the general perception that law is an appropriate background for diplomacy, as well as by the special needs of countries in political transition to negotiate new treaties, change alliances, join international organizations and find their 'legal' place in the international system. During this time of transition, the skills and capacities of lawyers are indispensable.

Diplomats speak several foreign languages. The linguistic skills of respondents were assessed through the number of languages, both native and foreign, spoken. Thus, the respondents were asked to specify their native language(s) and other languages in which they were proficient. The most frequent mentions made of foreign languages spoken were English (126), German (48), French (33), Italian (14) and Russian (12). More than 50% of respondents spoke two or more of these languages, while 40% spoke one of the five. The most common combinations were English/German (48), English/French (33), English/Italian (14), German/French (13), English/Russian (12), and German/Italian and German/Russian, with 8 cases each. Other foreign languages (as for example, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Hebrew, etc.) were also mentioned by a group of respondents.

One-third of the respondents spoke only one foreign language. The overwhelming majority spoke two or three foreign languages. While some people spoke four or five foreign languages, this was rare. Additional analysis showed that half of the people speaking four to five languages were philologists, while the other half were not. Furthermore, an independent-samples t-test conducted to compare the number of languages spoken by respondents with a degree in philology and without such a degree could not confirm that the respondents with either an initial or a final degree in philology spoke more languages than other respondents in the sample. It is possible that their knowledge of certain foreign language was better or superior to the knowledge of the same languages among respondents. However, an analysis of this point would have gone beyond the scope of the present study.

Combining native and foreign languages, as many as 50% of respondents spoke four or more languages. Another large group were respondents speaking 'only' three languages. It would have been particularly interesting to compare the language skills of diplomats with the language skills of the population in general or the population with university education. However, it was not possi-

ble to obtain statistics on the language skills of the general population or those with university education in the countries under study. Thus, an expectation that is necessarily speculative – is that diplomats know more languages than the general population and possibly than other people with the same level (but with different specializations) of education.

Family and Social Origins

Profiles of similarities and differences in the family background of respondents were compiled first by analysing gender and age, family status of respondents (single, married, divorced, widowed) and family size (number of children of respondents). Secondly, ethnic origins (titular nation, national minority) and religious beliefs were analysed. Thirdly, the respondents' area of residence at two points in time (the present and the time the respondents were 15 years old) was considered. Whether respondents had any relatives in diplomacy was analysed as well.

The age range of respondents (in 2005) was 23-51 years; the average age for both men and women was 33-34 years. 57% of the respondents were male (74) and 43% were female (56). Half of the respondents (65) were married, 42% (53) were single, slightly more than 6% (8) were divorced and less than 1% (1) were widowed. There was a strong positive correlation between family status single/married and the age of the respondents.

Diplomats represent a titular nation. In terms of ethnic identity, the majority of the respondents (more than 90%) defined themselves as belonging to the titular nationality of their country. The only exception to this was in Belarus, where only one out of three respondents (33.3%) defined him/herself as belonging to the titular nation.

One respondent each from Armenia, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan and Lithuania explicitly defined themselves as belonging to national minorities. In the case of Azerbaijan, two respondents defined themselves as Azeri Turkish, which arguably can be considered as the titular nationality as well; however, since official sources (CIA World Factbook 2006), define the population of Azerbaijan as Azerbaijani or Azeri, these two respondents were classified as not belonging to the titular nation. In an additional case from Lithuania, the person referred to him/herself as 'European'.

Thus, one could conclude that the new diplomatic services are reserved for titular nations. However, one should keep in mind that the concept of the titular nation was, at the time of this survey, itself a subject of change, in particular in new countries.

Diplomats profess the country's mainstream religion. The results obtained for religious beliefs are similar to the results obtained for ethnicity – the diplomats tend to belong to the mainstream religion in their respective countries. There are, however, some significant differences. The most noticeable case is

Albania, where none of the respondents reported being Muslim. Armenia is also complicated, and this was probably due to the choices provided. Thus, the Armenian Apostolic Church was likely viewed by some as Orthodox Christianity, while other respondents may have argued that it is closer to the Protestant Church (and thus defined themselves as Protestant) and still others would have defined themselves as belonging to the 'other' grouping. The cases of the Czech Republic and Estonia closely reflect the situation in the general population: more than 60% of the population in each country are unaffiliated (CIA World Factbook 2006). The results for Latvia seem to suggest that the majority of respondents either adhere to a religion other than the mainstream religion or are unaffiliated (75%, 14 respondents). Thus, with the noticeable exceptions of Albania and Latvia, the respondents, in their religious beliefs, were well representative of the majority of the population of their countries.

Diplomats come from urban areas, mainly from the capital city. The survey questionnaire provided a choice among 'capital city', 'other city' and 'rural area'; the respondents had the opportunity to define the area of residence at the time of survey and when they were 15 years old. The threshold of 15 years old was chosen to reveal the 'original' area of residence of future diplomats. It has been observed that some young people not originally from the capital city start defining themselves as being from the capital city after studying at its university or after getting their first job or renting a flat there, etc. Since the object was to uncover the original background of the respondents, 15 was selected as the threshold age. Thus people who were born and attended school in other areas were given a chance to specify this. This also helped to avoid miscalculating the proportion of the respondents with a capital city background.

The analysis of the current area of residence showed that 63% of the future diplomats originally resided and still reside in the capital city. Only 9% identified themselves as coming from a rural background. The remaining ones came from other urban areas. The analysis of the area of residence at the time the respondents were 15 years old yielded similar results. The small difference between the categories of 'capital city' and 'other urban areas' is explained by the fact that, since the transformation of the political landscape in the 1990s, several cities have became the capitals of the new states, Bratislava being one example. Thus, the diplomats are urban residents and in more than half of the cases, they are capital city residents. It is unusual for a diplomat to come from a rural area.

No diplomatic dynasties? Despite the widely held belief that diplomats tend to form a club, society, class or caste that is self-recruiting (Craig 1953), with strong hereditary traditions and closed to the entry of newcomers, a significant majority of respondents (75%, 97 cases) reported having no relatives in the diplomatic service. There were respondents who mentioned having such relatives (11.5%, 15 cases); other 15% of respondents (18 persons) did not answer this question. It is difficult to assess whether they did not answer because they

did not have relatives in the diplomatic service and thus believed that the question did not apply to them; or because they had such relatives but did not want to reveal this fact.

The fact that the majority of diplomats did not have relatives in the diplomatic service might indicate at least two points. First, if the diplomatic dynasties existed in the communist times, they were destroyed. This is particularly relevant to the countries that inherited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the previous regime and adopted a 'lustration' law (Poland, the Czech Republic). This would also imply that intergenerational exchange of skills, knowledge and experience was probably totally or partially lost. Second, it could also reflect a trend, familiar in the civil service in other modern states, according to which kinship relations play a decreasing role in public sphere careers (Putnam 1976, 23).

Diplomats come from intact families. The questions about social origins (through the family of origin) were framed around three areas: size of the family, divorce rate and the level of parents' education. The results of the family and divorce rate analyses suggest that the respondents largely came from intact families (80%, 103) and had either one brother or one sister (58.5%, 72) or were only children (17.1%, 21 cases). There were two exceptionally large families with 8 and 10 children respectively. Only in 15% of the cases were the parents of respondents divorced. This is a very low divorce rate indeed compared to the general populations in those countries. Why might this be important? It could suggest that a traditional intact family background serves as a good prerequisite for a future diplomat.

Diplomats come from educated families. An initial look at the educational level of the parents reveals that the majority of the diplomats' fathers (58%) and mothers (55%) had university degrees or the equivalent. More fathers than mothers had a PhD degree or higher, while more mothers than fathers had just a high school education. Most fathers (72%) were married to mothers with the same educational level, with 21% of families having a high school education, 43% of families having a university education, and 8% of families having a PhD degree. Thus, there was a clear tendency among the parents of future diplomats to marry a person with the same educational level, which corresponds to the tendency characteristic of the general population as well (Blossfeld et al. 2003). Compared to the pattern of enrolment in tertiary education in society, it is clear that the parents of respondents form a group of highly educated people in all the societies examined (UN 1980-2003).

Thus, not only the respondent him/herself but also his/her parents were educated people residing, as a rule, in an urban area. Thus, one can conclude that the respondents generally came from families of urban intellectuals/intelligentsia. This could also be indicative of the process of 'elite multiplication'.

Professional Experience

The professional career of the respondents was explored by looking at several key aspects: previous career, channels of recruitment into the national Foreign Service, and parallel career/additional jobs.

Diplomatic work is the main occupation of diplomats. The overwhelming majority of respondents were serving their countries as diplomats. More than 90% (119 cases) of the respondents at the time of the survey either had a position in the headquarters of the Foreign Service (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or were on diplomatic missions abroad. Moreover, another 3.8% (five respondents) held positions in the government which are considered part of the national diplomatic service according to the laws of their respective countries. These positions included: advisor to the head of state or head of government, press secretary of the head of state, and employee in the special portfolio ministry/department for European integration or defence. Only 4% (six respondents) had occupations unrelated to diplomacy.

The current diplomatic rank of the subjects revealed that the respondents were still young diplomatic professionals, with 75% of them having a rank between attaché and 1st secretary. However, there were 19 counsellors (16%), 7 ministers (6%) and 3 ambassadors (2.5%). As can be expected, diplomatic rank was strongly correlated with age – younger respondents had a lower rank, middle age-respondents had middle ranks and older respondents had a high diplomatic rank.

However, as noted above, only 30% of the participants in the Diplomatic Academy courses actually returned the questionnaire. It may be that many of the non-respondents failed to reply because they were no longer in the diplomatic service and thus either were not reached or felt that the research was irrelevant to them. This suggests that the actual drop-out rate may be higher than it appears when looking only at the current position of respondents. However, there is no statistical data to further quantify the drop-out rate in general or by country.

Diplomats experienced other walks of life first. The question about the previous career and parallel career (or additional jobs) during service in the diplomatic corps was open-ended. It had been hoped, ideally, to elicit a full, up-to-date career life of the respondents, including all the positions prior to entry into the diplomatic service, positions at the headquarters of the MFA, any postings abroad while in the Foreign Service, and positions held after the respondents left the MFA if applicable.

However, 27.7% (36 respondents) provided no answer to the question. There is not enough information to determine why they did not reply to the question – whether because the current position was the first in their career, or whether they believed that the previous position(s) held were not significant, or simply because the answer to the question required extensive writing. However, it could be seen that almost 60% of those who did not provide an answer

among the respondents were young people; hence, the explanation that the current position might be the first position held by the respondents in question seems viable.

Among people who are now part of the Foreign Service (119), slightly more than 1/3 of the respondents (34.5%, 41) had held more than one position; only 10% of respondents had held two or more positions. The rest (65.5%, 78 respondents) either had not held any professional position prior to joining the Foreign Service or did not provide an answer.

Among those who had held professional position(s) prior to joining the diplomatic corps, half of the respondents spent no more than two years in these positions. In this group, majority had spent one year or less in another career. On the other hand, the group of respondents who had spent five years or more in such a previous post was almost the same size as the group of respondents with a 1-year prior career. And almost half of that group were respondents who had spent 10 or more years in other careers. Thus, within the group of respondents who had had previous careers, the group of almost no career and a group with a serious previous professional career were both strongly represented. This suggests the existence of two groups among newcomers to diplomacy: (1) young with no or only a brief previous professional experience; and (2) older with medium or long previous professional experience.

During their diplomatic careers the majority of diplomats 63.8% (83), had changed their positions at least once. 46.9% (61) had had three or fewer positions, and only 15% (22 people) had four or more positions. This finding is in line with the fact that the majority of diplomats were young and relatively new to the Foreign Service.

More than 90% of the respondents for whom data are available changed positions in 3 years or less on the average. 50% changed their positions in 1-2 years, 30% in 2-3 years, and 15% in 1 year or less.

Again, the range of replies varied significantly. Moreover, a look at the diplomatic laws of several countries suggests that there are essentially different hierarchies of diplomatic positions, although in many instances they are quite close to each other. Diplomats are also moved between the MFA and a mission, either at the same horizontal level or upward on a vertical scale. However, in one country of the former Soviet Union, the policy of the MFA is such that every posting to a mission abroad goes hand-in-hand with downward mobility in position. The reason is that a posting abroad is desirable enough (in the first instance, probably financially motivated) that there will be personnel prepared to accept such a condition. Differences in the diplomatic scale and differences in MFA policies made it difficult to compare positions at headquarters and in missions across and within different countries. It could not be determined with any certainty whether a change in position also meant a professional/career promotion (vertical movement) or merely horizontal (or even downward) mobility. Therefore, the issue of the speed of promotion is not further discussed.

Diplomats pursue parallel careers. One question asked whether respondents had pursued parallel careers or had held any additional jobs while working in the MFA. Although it was an open-end question, the respondents were also given suggestions about potential answers, such as whether they were teaching at the university, providing consultancy or translating/interpreting services, giving language tutorials, publishing articles, etc.

Overall, only one-third of the respondents had held any additional jobs while working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (35.4%, 46). Most often, the respondents would use their knowledge of foreign languages to engage in translating/interpreting services (30.6%, 19). Otherwise, they taught part-time in universities (27.4%, 17) or published articles (22.6%, 14). Only in 8.15% of the cases (5) had a respondent combined his/her job with further studies and in another 6.5% (4) had also offered consultancy services. Another 4.8% (3) had given language tutorials.

To sum up, the majority had not had any additional job while serving in the diplomatic corps. Among those who had had such an additional job, the most popular categories were: teaching at the university, translating/interpreting services and publishing articles (TTP trio), all involving the use of intellectual capital.

Diplomats went through a competitive recruitment examination. A recruitment examination was the normal channel for the majority of subjects. As many as one-third said that they had had to pass an examination prior to becoming a part of the Foreign Service of their respective countries. As a rule, they had replied to an announcement in the mass media. The next largest category (21%, 33 people) revealed that they had joined the MFA at the personal invitation of one of the recruiters of the MFA; less than one-fourth of these (8) had also been obliged to take a recruitment examination. Another 19% (30) remained in the MFA after doing an internship: only three people from this latter group had also taken the recruitment examination. Yet another 7% (11) had joined the MFA by transferring from other positions in the civil service. Almost 2% (3) were promoted from technical personnel to the diplomatic ranks, and less than 1% (1) had acquired a position in the MFA as a political appointee. 4% (6) said they did not fit any of the categories above and did not further specify their mode of entry into the Foreign Service.

Overall, an examination was the main recruitment channel by which the majority of respondents entered into national Foreign Service. However, a personal invitation by one of the recruiters remained a significant channel through which aspiring candidates make their way into diplomacy. Another successful path was by interning in the MFA. The need to take the recruitment examination in this case was obviated by virtue of the personal invitation or internship experience.

Many respondents answered that both the ‘participation in the recruitment examination’ and an ‘announcement in mass media (newspapers, TV, etc)’

were applicable to them. Thus, it can be supposed that the media is increasingly becoming a tool by which recruitment examinations are announced, and this indicates a certain openness by and accessibility of the Foreign Service.

Another frequent combination was 'after doing an internship with the MFA' and 'personal invitation by one of the recruiters of the MFA'. The direction of interaction could go both ways: some respondents received personal invitations to join the MFA first as interns, and then later became employees. Others received personal invitations to join the MFA after a successful internship period. The criteria used by the people who invited candidates into the Foreign Service – whether there were personal relationships between the recruiters and candidates, or whether the recruiters were looking for special credentials in the candidates or whether the criteria were altogether different – are unknown. Overall, the practice of issuing a personal invitation to join the Foreign Service is a good example of the cooptation of elites, which in periods of stability would serve as strong evidence of the reproduction of elites.

Gender

Comparison along gender lines did not constitute the focus of this study, however the analysis of the database revealed some interesting observations which are presented here for the judgements by the reader.

Family Status

Despite that there was a strong positive correlation between family status single/married and the age of the respondents; there was a difference in the pattern between men and women. While 63% of women (32) were single and only 37% of women (19) were married, it was the reverse with men. Only 32% of the men (21) were still single and 68% (46) were married. This difference held true when the relationship was controlled for the age of respondents. The explanation for this pattern is not clear. There may possibly be a surplus of women in some of the societies under study which would explain why more women than men remain unmarried. However, it could also be that a (diplomatic) career has different effects on the personal life of female diplomats than it does on male diplomats, adding to the world wide evidence that women in high-powered demanding careers may still be less likely to be married than are men in the same careers.

State Religion

The analysis of respondents, grouped according to the state religion, elucidated a difference in the percentage of women in these research groups. In the Catholic research group, the proportion of women to men is 50/50. In both the Muslim and Orthodox research groups, the proportion of women to men is 40/60. In

the Protestant research group, less than 20% are men and more than 80% of respondents are women. However, when gender distribution in the sample is compared with gender distribution in tertiary education of the total population, the Orthodox research group turns out to have a disproportionably high number of men in diplomacy, followed by the Muslim research group, while the Protestant research group turns out to have a disproportionably high number of women. In the Catholic research group, men are only slightly overrepresented. Thus, it can be asserted that the Foreign Services in Orthodox countries favour men, while those in Protestant countries favour women. This first finding is counterintuitive; the expectation was that diplomacies in Muslim countries would strongly favour men, but there is no indication as to why the diplomacies in Orthodox countries would be similar in this respect. The second finding – that Protestant countries favour women – was altogether unexpected. The possible explanation can lie in the geographical vicinity to the Scandinavian countries, which are known for the best representation of women in politics, as well as in religious vicinity – as some of the Scandinavian countries are also Protestant.

General Portrait of the New Post-Communist Diplomat

An average respondent in the sample of the entry-level post-communist diplomats was a highly educated person. S/he studied at the university in the capital city of her/his country, and every second respondent had earned a Master's degree. Furthermore, one in ten had already earned or was pursuing a PhD degree. Every fourth respondent specialized in law, as a rule international law; every fifth in foreign affairs (diplomacy or international relations) and every tenth in international economics for his/her highest degree. However, some of the respondents studied philology or other unrelated subjects for their first degree, and only later studied subjects related to foreign affairs. Respondents coming from formerly multinational states spoke two native languages. In addition, the young diplomats spoke two or more foreign languages, English usually being one of them.

At the time of the study, the respondents were in their mid-thirties (33-34 years), more likely to be married than single if a man and more likely to be single if a woman). He or she belonged to the titular nation of his/her country and also adhered to the mainstream religion of that country.

S/he came from an intact family (her/his parents were not divorced) and s/he had one brother or sister. At the time s/he became a diplomat, her/his parents lived in the capital city. As a rule, both parents had at least a university degree. Very few diplomats have parents of modest social background (workers or farmers).

For the most part s/he was the first diplomat in the family line. The normal path to becoming a diplomat is taking a recruitment examination. However,

there are important 'side' channels – personal invitation by one of the recruiters for the MFA or an internship with the MFA. If this is the case, there is usually no need to take the recruitment examination.

In two out of three cases, the position with the MFA marked the beginning of a professional career. The new member of the Foreign Service was awarded either no diplomatic rank or a low diplomatic rank (attaché or 3rd secretary).

After working three years or less, s/he changed position for the first time and roughly in another two years did so again. Whether this was always a promotion or not is impossible to establish from the data. Furthermore, one in three diplomats held additional jobs, mainly using his or her intellectual capital. The most popular trio of jobs were teaching at a university, translating/interpreting services and publishing articles (TTP).

As noted above, s/he is in her/his mid-thirties; yet, at the same time, and in the majority of cases, the job in the diplomatic corps is the first significant position. This suggests that there may possibly be two subgroups, namely the young and inexperienced (for whom a job in diplomacy is the first significant position), and the new and experienced (that is people already in their thirties or older who had had professional experience).

Conclusion

This article presented the results of the study of the diplomatic elites in the post-communist countries. Geographically, the research area was limited to the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Chronologically, the study covered the period of a decade and a half after the change of the political regime (1989-2004).

Based on classical theories of elite transformation, an attempt was made to demonstrate the social transformation of the diplomatic elites. The objective was to analyze which groups of people were favoured at the entry level of the diplomatic institutions of post communist Europe. The analysis was based on a survey, providing detailed information on respondents' demographic characteristics, educational and family background, social origins, and professional experiences and recruitment channels. The 130 questionnaires turned out to be a rich source of information, showing the general characteristics of entry-level diplomats in the post-communist countries. This ultimately led to large-scale social patterns being revealed by the survey data.

The analysis of diplomats in post communist Europe demonstrated that diplomats were not drawn proportionally from all segments of society. On the contrary, they were disproportionably drawn from a very exclusive segment of society: urban highly educated people, the urban intelligentsia. On the other side, the post-communist diplomats shared the features of other, less privileged strata of the society (such as holding parallel jobs to supplement their income),

which would not normally happen in the periods of political (and economic) stability.

What does this tell us? The presence of these characteristics among the diplomats under study points to the conclusion that entry-level diplomats have the features of the established modern elite. The picture of a diplomat from a post communist country is similar to the existing picture of a diplomat from any western country.

This leads to two further observations: First, it is politically reassuring for western communities that functional elite with a certain set of qualities similar to those in western countries is coming into being. Second, it is theoretically comforting for political elite scholars that the diplomatic elite, a part of political elite, is resistant to changes, maybe even particularly resistant to changes; even after a change of the political regime, diplomats continue to be recruited from a strata from which the diplomats would otherwise be recruited in a country experiencing a period of political stability. Nevertheless, the political transformation adds social changes to the pattern of work and life of diplomats, otherwise, not typical to political elite.

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